

Research Toolkit & UG Starter Pack

A step-by-step writing, sourcing and tools guide for first-time authors.
The 17 Juris Initiative

How to use this toolkit: watch the videos in Part 2 and Part 3 first, read one example brief from Part 4, then collect your data from the portals in Part 5. Tap the blue title or the OPEN button on any card to open the link.

1 What is a policy brief? (for UG students)

Unlike a college essay or a theoretical thesis, a policy brief is a direct, action-oriented document:

- Decision-makers (ministers, bureaucrats, UN officers) do not have time to read 50 pages.
- The brief tells them what the real problem on the ground is, where current laws and policies are failing, and which 3-4 realistic steps should be taken immediately.
- Use plain language that even a non-expert can understand easily.

2 Foundational learning and video guides

Watch or read these free guides before you start writing:

Research Paper Writing Lecture (idea to publication)

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DleV2LDnER0>

OPEN >

World Bank policy brief toolkit (step-by-step guide)

PDF: Developing Policy Briefs

<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e325f4a236440853757892321dc84413-0320012024/original/D2S4-DevelopingPolicyBriefs.pdf>

OPEN >

IDRC policy brief writing manual

PDF: How to write a policy brief

<https://idrc-crdi.ca/sites/default/files/idrcpolicybrieftoolkit.pdf>

OPEN >

WHO regional policy brief template

PDF: Capacity Building for Development of Policy Briefs

<https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/evidence-data/Template-Policy-brief-development.pdf>

OPEN >

3 Suggested extra videos and reading

I added these to your list. I opened each page to confirm what it contains.

Videos

How to cook a policy brief? (4-part video series, University of Geneva)

Episode 1: Formulating a policy problem. Episode 2: Choosing the right target. Episode 3: Analyzing the dynamics of a policy issue. Episode 4: Identifying sound policy options.

<https://mediaserver.unige.ch/collection/179688>

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How to write a policy brief? (webcast, University of Cologne)

What a policy brief is, how to structure it, choosing a topic, and pitching it in an elevator ride. Recorded in 2015.

<https://viaduct.uni-koeln.de/en/publications/viaduct-webcasts/webcast-policy-brief>

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Reading

How to write a policy brief (IDRC, hosted by BetterEvaluation)

A short web page with slides explaining the purpose and steps of writing a policy brief.

<https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/how-write-policy-brief>

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APA Style: official reference examples

The official APA 7th edition examples for reports, articles, datasets and web pages.

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples>

OPEN >

Zotero quick start guide

Learn to save sources and generate APA citations automatically.

https://www.zotero.org/support/quick_start_guide

OPEN >

4 Benchmark open-access examples (see how it is written)

UN DESA policy briefs

Official UN policy briefs; the page lists the latest ones.

<https://desapublications.un.org/policy-briefs>

OPEN >

UNICEF Innocenti working papers

Research and policy papers from UNICEF's research office.

<https://www.unicef.org/innocenti>

OPEN >

5 Verified primary data portals (Wikipedia and blogs strictly prohibited)

Every claim and number must be from the last 3-5 years and linked to a primary source.

UN SDG Indicators Global Database

Target-by-target country statistical data.

<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>

OPEN >

World Bank DataBank

Poverty metrics, labor data, schooling, health expenditure.

<https://databank.worldbank.org>

OPEN >

UNDP Human Development Reports

Human Development Index (HDI) and Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).

<https://hdr.undp.org/data-center>

OPEN >

ILOSTAT (International Labour Organization)

Informal labor conditions, youth employment, wages.

<https://ilostat.ilo.org>

OPEN >

WHO Global Health Observatory

Public health access, healthcare infrastructure.

<https://who.int/data/gho>

OPEN >

National government sources

Use the National Statistics Bureau and the central ministries of your chosen countries: official gazettes, acts and census reports. Use the original documents, not summaries.

6 Approved research and AI tool stack

Literature and paper discovery (find what to read)

Semantic Scholar: <https://www.semanticscholar.org>
Elicit: <https://elicit.com>
Connected Papers: <https://www.connectedpapers.com>
Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com>

Long report synthesis (understanding 50+ page UN or government PDFs)

ChatDOC (direct tables and citation mapping): <https://www.chatdoc.com>
ChatPDF (summary and question-answer): <https://www.chatpdf.com>
Humata: <https://www.humata.ai>

Grammar and tone polish

Grammarly: <https://www.grammarly.com>
LanguageTool: <https://languagetool.org>

Free citation generator

Zotero (automated APA 7th edition citations): <https://www.zotero.org>

Similarity checkers

Turnitin: <https://www.turnitin.com>
DupliChecker: <https://www.duplichecker.com>

7 AI usage ethics and anti-plagiarism rules

Allowed

- Fixing grammar and sentence flow.
- Extracting specific data points from large policy PDFs (but verify them and write the text yourself).
- Background literature search.

Strictly prohibited

- Generating a whole section or analysis with a generative AI prompt and copy-pasting it.
- Hallucinated or fake citations (fake references created by AI).
- A similarity score of 10% or more on Turnitin / DupliChecker. It must be strictly under 10%.

8 APA 7th edition reference examples

In-text citation

- Single author: (UNDP, 2024)
- Two authors: (Smith & Patel, 2023)
- Three or more: (Sharma et al., 2022)
- With a specific page: (UNICEF, 2024, p. 18)

Reference list format

Report

Organization. (Year). *Title of report* (Report type). Publisher. URL
Example: United Nations Children's Fund. (2024). *State of the World's Children*. UNICEF. <https://doi.org/...>
(replace the dots with the real DOI or link)

Journal article

Author, A., & Author, B. (Year). Title of article. *Journal Name*, Volume(Issue), Pages. DOI

Official examples for every other source type:

<https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/references/examples>